

**BASIC INFORMATION****DESCRIPTION**

Gradual, painless hair loss that occurs in a distinctive pattern as a person ages. The earlier the hair loss begins, the greater the eventual loss. Some persons have short periods of intense hair loss, followed by long, stable periods. In men, hair loss appears as early as the 20's; in women, rarely appears before the 50's.

**FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

- In men, hair thins on top of the head and recedes in the temple and front areas.
- In women, hair loss usually occurs only on top of the head.
- In both sexes, some diffuse loss may also occur.

**CAUSES**

- Genetic factors.
- Hormonal factors. Male hormones are an important factor in balding. Men castrated at a young age don't develop pattern baldness regardless of genetic factors unless they receive supplemental testosterone (a male hormone). Correspondingly, estrogen (a female hormone) may be protective in women, because hair loss rarely begins before menopause.

**RISK INCREASES WITH**

Family history of pattern baldness. Hair loss that occurs after illness, pregnancy or as an adverse reaction to drugs is a different form of baldness.

**PREVENTIVE MEASURES**

The drug minoxidil has been shown to slow or reverse baldness to some degree in some men. It is expensive (see Medications). Other medical treatments are under-going study.

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- Incurable at present.
- Use of a hairpiece or hair transplant is acceptable to some and a topical prescription medication may help others.

**POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS**

No medical complications, but baldness can cause emotional distress.

**TREATMENT****GENERAL MEASURES**

- Don't use medicated shampoos and ointments. They are useless.
- If you cannot accept balding as part of aging, there are 3 options: Wearing a toupee, wig or other hair substitute; a hair-transplant operation; or topical medication. Hair transplant surgery has improved but may have complications, so be sure to seek information about the advantages and disadvantages before undergoing the procedure.

**MEDICATIONS**

Medicine is not necessary for this disorder. A non-prescription drug, minoxidil, seems to stimulate hair growth in 25-50% of patients, but effectiveness is highly variable and long-term benefits are still unknown. Minoxidil is expensive and if it helps you, you need to continue applications indefinitely to sustain improvement.

**ACTIVITY**

No restrictions.

**DIET**

No special diet.

**NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF**

You want a medical referral for hair transplantation.